DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 241 730 CE 038 477

TITLE	Principles of Good Practice in Continuing Education.
INSTITUTION	Council on the Continuing Education Unit, Silver Spring, Md.
PUB DATE	1 Apr 84
NOTE	37p.; For a related document, see CE 038 476.
AVAILABLE FROM	Council on the Continuing Education Unit, 13000 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904 ($5.00; 10-24 copies--$4.20 each; over 24 copies--$3.75 each).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Behavioral Objectives; *Continuing Education; *Educational Needs; Educational Objectives; *Educational Principles; *Evaluation; Needs Assessment; *Outcomes of Education; *Program Administration

ABSTRACT

Intended to serve as a standard reference document for the field of continuing education and training, this set of criteria for good practice is for general use by all sponsors, providers, and users of continuing education within any setting, for any clientele, and for individual learners. Following an introduction, suggestions are made for use of the principles, and definitions for terms are provided. The proposed Principles of Good Practice in Continuing Education are presented in five parts: learning needs, learning outcomes, learning experiences, assessment of learning outcomes, and administration. Following the statement of each principle is a set of more specific process elements for good practice that normally are expected to be present in the operation of a sound continuing education organization or unit. Overall, 18 general principles and 70 elements of good practice are proposed. A discussion of each principle is provided. (YLB)

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PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE IN CONTINUING EDUCATION

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Report of the

CCEU Project to Develop Standards and Criteria for Good Practice in Continuing Education

1984
Council on the Continuing Education Unit
13000 Old Columbia Pike
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The Council on the Continuing Education Unit is a non-profit federation of educational and training organizations and individuals devoted to the constructive and consistent use of the Continuing Education Unit and to improvement of the quality and effectiveness of continuing education, training and development.

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE IN CONTINUING EDUCATION

APRIL 1, 1984

FOREWORD

The Principles of Good Practice in Continuing Education are the result of a three-year project funded and supported by the Council on the Continuing Education Unit in keeping with two of its stated purposes:

- To promote the strengthening of standards in the field of continuing education and training.
- To work cooperatively with educational organizations, including colleges and universities and other educational institutions; proprietary organizations; professional societies; units of government; and other organizations engaged in noncredit continuing education and training.

Diversity is one of the hallmarks of continuing education. This diversity extends from program structure and content to the manner in which it is delivered to the learner. By presenting the Principles for Good Practice it is the intent of the Council to preserve the diversity so essential to the field while addressing problems associated with the status and quality of continuing education and training. The primary focus of the Principles is on the learner and the elements essential for providing learning experiences of quality that recognize the learners' needs and desired learning outcomes.

The Council gratefully acknowledges the extensive work provided by the project committees and staff, the hundreds of individuals who participated in the project, and the general support of its co-sponsor the National University Continuing Education Association.

Leonard R. Brice
President
Council on the Continuing
Education Unit

PREFACE

The CCEU Project to Develop Standards and Criteria for Good Practice in Continuing Education is the first major research project of the Council on the Continuing Education Unit (CCEU) specifically designed to contribute to general improvement of the overall quality of continuing education. CCEU's main goal is to identify and promulgate "good practice" in continuing education programs and activities. The ultimate and primary beneficiaries of the project were envisioned to be the millions of adult learners who annually enroll in continuing education and training programs throughout the nation. The belief and hope of the members of the project Steering Committee, the Review Panel, the Writing Task Force, and the staff are that, as the Principles of Good Practice for Continuing Education are implemented by sponsors and providing organizations, agencies, and institutions, adult learners will indeed benefit by receiving more effective learning experiences in their continuing education endeavors.

No attempt was made in the project to standardize the many and varied continuing education providers that exist in this nation. Rather, we produced a set of Principles of Good Practice in Continuing Education as useful guidelines for both sponsors and providers that can be adapted locally for use with the individual learners they serve. The principles are designed for use in any type of program of personal interest to the learner, or for professional development, training, or credentialing.

Special appreciation is expressed to the hundreds of individuals who provided direct input into the work of the project—respondents to the survey; the pretest group; the Steering Committee; the Review Panel; the Writing Task Force members; my colleagues on the project staff, Louis E. Phillips and Richard M. House; to North Carolina State University, The University of North Carolina, and the University of Georgia for providing support services; and to our sponsors, the Council on the Continuing Education Unit and the National University Continuing Education Association—all of whom contributed time, thought, effort, and support to bringing this project to fruition.

Grover J. Andrews
Principal Investigator
CCEU Project
March, 1984

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INTRODUCTION

The Principles of Good Practice for Continuing Education are the result of a three-year study sponsored by the Council on the Continuing Education Unit (CCEU). A cooperating partner in the study was the National University Continuing Education Association (NUCEA).

Background

The CCEU Project for the Development of Standards was designed (1) to identify current standards, criteria, and guidelines for continuing education and training; (2) to gather, from a broad-based group representative of the field of continuing education, information and opinions on the need for and content of standards and criteria to improve the quality of continuing education and training; and (3) to develop and propose a set of standards and criteria for good practice in continuing education for general use by business and industry, professional associations and organizations, educational institutions and organizations, government agencies, health-care organizations and institutions, and others involved in continuing education and training as either providers, users, learners, or regulators.

A large number of individuals representative of the field of continuing education participated in various phases of the project. Over 800 of these representatives participated in a national survey; 23 sets of standards, guidelines, or criteria were identified for study and analysis; 21 individuals from business and industry, professional associations, educational organizations, government agencies, and regulatory bodies served on various committees to advise and assist the staff in implementing the project. Thirty-three organizations participated in a pretest of the survey instrument and the proposed standards of good practice. Presentations and group discussions at the CCEU Annual Conferences in 1981, 1982, and 1983; presentations at a variety of other state and regional meetings; and a nationally representative invitational conference of 100 individuals held in Arlington, Virginia, October 31-November 1, 1983, were important sources of feedback throughout the project.

Principles of Good Practice

Discussion about the appropriate nomenclature for the final product continued throughout the study. Should the elements deemed essential for developing and implementing quality continuing education pro-

grams be termed "standards" or "criteria," or was some other term more appropriate to express the intent and purpose of the material produced? Near the conclusion of the project, consensus was reached among the Steering Committee, the Review Panel, the Writing Task Force, and the staff that the evolving statements were, in fact, "principles of good practice for continuing education." Thus, the term "principles" in lieu of "standards" or "criteria" was adopted and is used in this document. The use of the term "principles" also provides a better opportunity for those organizations subject to existing standards to utilize the Principles of Good Practice for Continuing Education.

Emphasis in this document concentrates on general principles that are intended to be flexible and that could be followed by any group providing continuing education, regardless of size, scope, mode of operation, or type of program offered. Following the statement of each principle is a set of more specific process elements for good practice that normally are expected to be present in the operation of a sound continuing education organization or unit. While it should be expected that all of the principles will be observed, the degree to which the specific elements will be developed and implemented within a continuing education organization, of necessity, will depend on the size, scope, and availability of resources.

The principles and elements of good practice presented in this document are not radically different from those identified elsewhere as important and desirable. What is new, and different, are the consolidation and refinement of principles and elements from a variety of sources into a single set of principles of good practice(s); a pervasive emphasis on learning outcomes for the individual learner in continuing education; and a focus on the "problem-centered" nature typical of continuing education programs/activities.

Traditionally, instruction is perceived as "subject centered," whereas the current movement of most continuing education and training programs is toward a "problem-centered" orientation reflecting the notion that adults seek additional learning in order to solve a problem. This problem-centered orientation, which usually must deal with a more complex group of learners and other variables, requires careful attention to the problem(s) to be addressed by the learning experience in maximizing program effectiveness. This is not to imply that personal-interest programs and activities representing "learning for the sake of learning" should cease to exist. Such programs have been an important part of continuing education for a long, long time and will continue to be so. One might hope that the principles of good practice also will enhance this type of programs/activities for the personal-interest learner.

Learning Outcomes

A generally accepted purpose of continuing education programs/activities is to help maintain, expand, and improve individual knowledge, skills (performance), and attitude and, by so doing, equally meet the improvement and advancement of individuals, professions, and organizations. Therefore, a primary emphasis in the Principles of Good Practice is on the individual learner. The term "outcomes," as used in this document, usually refers to individual "learning outcomes." The intended meaning of the term, "learning outcomes," as used within the Principles of Good Practice, is to describe what learners will/should be able to do or know, as a consequence of a learning experience, that they could not do/did not know at the outset of the experience. While many varieties of outcomes are desirable, a "learning outcome" is distinguished from other types of outcomes by the characteristic that it is the learner (student) who is expected to exhibit the knowledge, skills, and attitude specified in the formal statements of learning outcomes.

The Proposed Principles of Good Practice for Continuing Education

The proposed Principles of Good Practice in Continuing Education are presented in five parts:

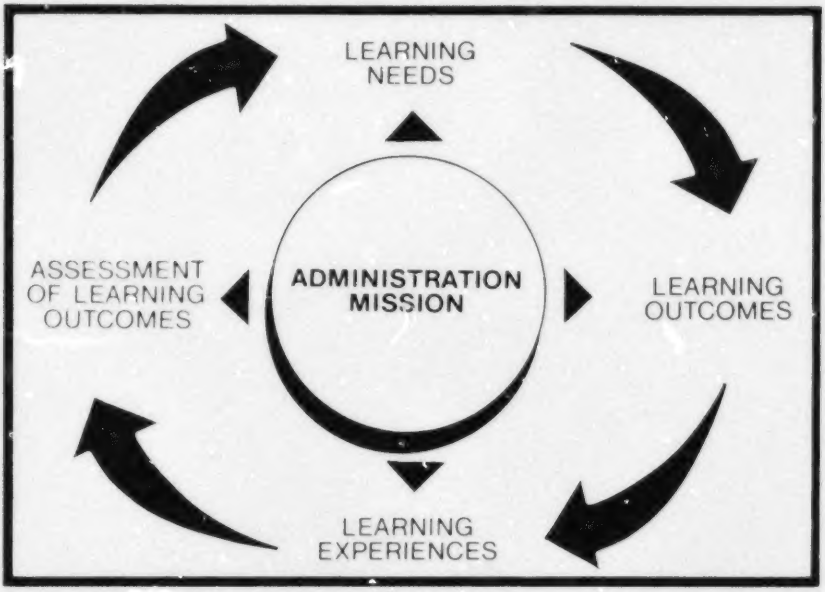
Part One:	Learning Needs
Part Two:	Learning Outcomes
Part Three:	Learning Experiences
Part Four:	Assessment of Learning Outcomes
Part Five:	Administration

Overall, 18 general principles and 70 elements of good practice are proposed.

Sponsors and providers of continuing education programs/activities (businesses and industries, professional associations, colleges and universities, consulting firms, private vendors, government agencies, and other organizations) may offer a variety of programs/activities ranging from a multi-course curriculum to workshops, seminars, courses, and individual self-study. All programs/activities offered should be designed to meet the educational needs of the intended audience; have clear goals and learning outcomes; employ appropriate content, methods, and delivery systems; have effective learning assessment procedures; and have an appropriate administrative organization to guide and be responsible for the continuing education operation in carrying out its purpose and mission in a responsible manner.

When applied responsibly and holistically, the Principles of Good Practice for Continuing Education will provide guidance and direction to continuing education sponsors and providers in developing and implementing quality programs designed to meet general and specific needs of the learners to be served.

The iterative nature of the Principles of Good Practice for Continuing Education and their relationship to the central functions of administration and mission of the provider, perceived as a continuous, ongoing process, may be illustrated as follows:



Information in the sections that follow may be useful in understanding the Principles of Good Practice in Continuing Education. These sections are "How to Use the Principles of Good Practice" and "Definitions of Terms" used throughout this presentation. The reader also may wish to refer to the published report on the research component of the project, *Standards of Practice in Continuing Education: A Status Study* (1983), by Richard M. House. This report is available from the Council on the Continuing Education Unit and may be secured by writing:

Council on the Continuing Education Unit
13000 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, Maryland 20904

HOW TO USE THE PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

The Principles of Good Practice for Continuing Education are designed to serve all sponsors, providers, and users of continuing education within any setting, for any clientele, and for individual learners. They are intended to serve as a standard reference document for the field of continuing education and training and may be used in a variety of ways, depending on the purpose, scope, and nature of the organization, agency, or institution. Individual learners also may find the principles useful in judging the appropriateness or quality of a program they are considering attending.

Among the various possibilities for use of the Principles of Good Practice are the following:

- As a guideline to business and industry for internal organizational structure, administration, and development of continuing education and training programs.
- As a guideline for professional associations and societies in providing or selecting appropriate sponsors of continuing education and training for professional renewal or updating.
- As a guideline for sponsors of continuing education and training to use in providing or selecting vendors of continuing education programs/activities.
- As a guideline for providers and vendors in developing and implementing continuing education programs/activities in keeping with the recognized principles of good practice that are normally used and expected.
- As a guideline to educational institutions and organizations in developing, organizing, implementing, and administering noncredit continuing education workshops, seminars, conferences, courses, and programs of any type or size in any subject-matter area.
- As a reference for regulatory, accrediting, and licensing agencies as to what is acceptable practice in providing continuing education programs/activities.
- As a reference of measure for use by organizations, agencies, and professional societies in developing standards for continuing education and training.

- As a standard reference document on principles of good practice in continuing education to be used:
  - in designing new continuing education programs/activities.
  - in reviewing and improving existing programs/activities.
  - to bring forth important issues to be addressed by key personnel within an organization who have responsibility for establishing or improving a continuing education unit.
  - as a basis for membership within a continuing education organization.
  - by evaluation or review teams in evaluating the effectiveness of an organization's continuing education unit.
  - for the identification of the competencies and skills needed by individuals who seek careers in the field of continuing education.
- As a guide to the consumer—the general public, purchasers of continuing education and training, and prospective learners. The Principles of Good Practice, if followed, should provide the consumer reasonable assurance that the programs/activities offered are of acceptable quality.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms and their definitions are presented to provide the reader with a point of reference for their use within the Principles of Good Practice for Continuing Education.

Activity or **course**: educational activity in which the learner is enrolled. (Activity and course are used interchangeably in this document and refer to an individual course, seminar, workshop, teleconference, etc.)

Assessment: the process for determining individual achievement of learning outcomes.

Continuing education: formal education programs/activities for professional development and training, or for credentialing, for which academic credit is not awarded, or of personal interest to the learner, for which academic credit is not awarded.

Continuing Education Unit (CEU): 10 contact hours of participation in an organized continuing education experience under responsible sponsorship, capable direction, and qualified instruction.

Credentialing: a process that includes "(1) definition of attitudes, competencies, knowledge, or skills to be certified; (2) assessment of each individual to determine whether he or she meets the requisites; (3) issuance of a document to attest the individual's possession of the requisites, ... [and] (4) periodic recertification that the holder continues to possess the requisites for the credential or meets new ones made necessary by advances in the field."[1]

Evaluation: determining success in meeting goals of the organization, clientele, program, or activity as a whole.

Goal: statement of broad direction or general intent (not specifically measurable).

Learner or **participant**: individual enrolled in a continuing education program/activity. (Learner and participant are used interchangeably in this document.)

Learning experience: an interaction between the learner and planned, organized educational activities resulting in a change in the learner's knowledge, skills, or attitude.

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[1] J. W. Miller and O. Mills (eds.), *Credentialing Educational Accomplishments* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1978), p. 9.

Learning need: the difference between the current level and the desired level of the learner's knowledge, skills, or attitude.

Learning outcome: knowledge, skills, or attitude acquired as a result of a learning experience; not to be confused with objectives.

Organization, **provider**, or **sponsor**: the offerer or deliverer of a continuing education program/activity. (Organization, provider, and sponsor are used interchangeably in this document.)

Outcome: a specified change that is measurable or observable.

Program: an interrelated series of educational activities.

Quality control: the process of ensuring that a program/activity meets a desired level of excellence.

User: the organization, agency, or individual who is the client for the continuing education program/activity.

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE IN CONTINUING EDUCATION

PART ONE:

Learning Needs in Continuing Education

1.1 **Principle**

Sponsors or providers of continuing education programs/activities utilize appropriate processes to define and analyze the issue(s) or problem(s) of individuals, groups, and organizations for the purpose of determining learning needs.

Amplifications and Interpretation of Principle

1.1.1 The procedure(s) utilized in assessing learner needs is systematic and identifiable.

1.1.2 The procedure(s) utilized in assessing learner needs minimize assumptions and maximize the use of objective data.

1.1.3 The documentation produced during needs assessment becomes the basis for developing learning outcomes.

Discussion

A continuing education program/activity may originate from a variety of sources, such as a request made by an individual, an organization, or a segment of the community. In either case, it is appropriate to determine whether there is justification for a continuing education program/activity or if there may be more suitable alternative ways to fulfill the need. One purpose of a needs assessment is to make this determination.

Learning needs of the intended audience may include the individual participant's expressed needs or personal interest, deficiencies in an individual's performance, or deficiencies in the quality and effectiveness of an organization.

Emphasis should be given to providing for learner input in the needs identification process. There should be some form of confirmation that the identified needs are appropriate in the eyes of individual learners.

Identification of learning needs is also one means for issue or problem definition. Likewise, such assessment may validate previously

identified problems. Regardless of which comes first, essential elements in improving continuing education program/activity effectiveness are interpretation and analysis of pertinent information and the conclusions reached. Although issues, problems, and needs may differ, certain processes and techniques should be developed and utilized by the provider to assure a *good faith* effort in the establishment of an effective and precise learning design.

PART TWO:
Learning Outcomes in Continuing Education

2.1 **Principle**

The continuing education provider has clear and concise, written statements of intended learning outcomes for the continuing education program/activity.

Amplifications and Interpretation of Principle

2.1.1 The statements of intended learning outcomes utilize terms that are (1) concise and (2) focus on intended change in learners' knowledge, skills and attitude during or after completion of the program/activity rather than on the content coverage.

2.1.2 The statements of intended learning outcomes are assessable.

2.1.3 The number of statements of intended learning outcomes is limited to those that can be expressed or demonstrated by learners through some form of assessment.

2.1.4 The statements of intended learning outcomes are considered appropriate and relevant by the learner.

2.1.5 Learning outcome statements specify the performance level at which the learner should be able to express or demonstrate intended changes in knowledge, skills, or attitude.

Discussion

For users of continuing education programs/activities to have the opportunity to select those that have the highest probability of being

supportive of personal and organizational goals, it is imperative that the provider prepare and make available printed statements that clearly describe what a learner will be able to do as a result of participating in the program/activity. A statement of an intended learning outcome provides a focus for instruction and for learning. Hence, to assure the learners and the user organizations that, in fact, such a focus does exist for a program/activity and to communicate clearly what that focus is, the provider of a continuing education program/activity should provide statements of intended learning outcomes that are measurable or observable, clearly stated, and focused on the level of performance expressed or demonstrated by the learner. If such information is not available, the benefit of the program/activity to the participant and the client organization may be unclear.

2.2 **Principle**

The statements of intended learning outcomes of a continuing education program/activity focus on learning that can be applied by the learner to situations beyond the boundaries of the learning environment.

Amplifications and Interpretation of Principle

2.2.1 The learning outcome can be utilized and applied by learners in settings other than the learning environment (e.g., job, office, profession) after completion of the program/activity.

2.2.2 The learning outcomes of a continuing education program/activity support the personal, professional, or career goals of the learners.

2.2.3 The learning outcomes of a continuing education program/activity support, where appropriate, the goals of the client organization.

2.2.4 Where appropriate, a follow-up evaluation is made of former participants in a continuing education program/activity to determine if and how well the knowledge, skills, or attitude learned are utilized in work performance.

Discussion

Adherence to the principle requiring written statements of intended learning outcomes is a necessary but insufficient condition for good practice in continuing education. In addition, the value of a particular

learning outcome needs to be established. Does the learning outcome in question contribute to the achievement of results desired by the learners and the user organization?

The questions of realism, relevance, and application raise the spectre of whether the stated learning outcome exists for the "program's sake" or for the benefit of the participant. Hence, the provider of the continuing education program/activity also should state intended learning outcomes that are beneficial to the learner beyond the boundaries of the learning experience. For example, a learning outcome might focus on the learner being able to program several *types* of computers, rather than on the learner being able to program only the particular computer available in the learning environment.

2.3 **Principle**

When a continuing education program consists of several interrelated activities, courses, seminars, and workshops, the contribution of the intended learning outcomes of each to the total program is clearly designated.

Amplifications and Interpretation of Principle

2.3.1 There are a limited number of *major* learning outcomes for each course.

2.3.2 The interrelationship among the courses and learning outcomes in the continuing education program is clearly specified.

2.3.3 A description of the total program, including 2.3.1 and 2.3.2, is available in printed form.

Discussion

Adult learners most often participate in continuing education programs/activities with specific personal and organizational goals in mind. It must be clear to the participant and to the user organization how a particular continuing education activity fits into a larger program, if such a program exists. The provision of a "picture" of the larger program enables the learners to decide whether and when they will enroll in specific courses within a total program. The learning outcome statements for each continuing education course provide a sense of quality assurance to both participants and user organizations. Such statements of intended learning outcomes, in conjunction with a clear "view" of the interrelationships among the courses, help establish that each major

learning outcome contributes to the total continuing education program and thus to the progress that each participant is making toward each major learning outcome.

2.4 **Principle**

The agenda of the continuing education program/activity clearly specifies when each learning outcome will be addressed.

Amplifications and Interpretation of Principle

2.4.1 There is an agenda or schedule for the entire period of the continuing education program/activity in which each segment is clearly identified.

2.4.2 Every learning outcome has an allotted time period or sequence as specified in the program/activity agenda.

Discussion

Specifying when each learning outcome will be addressed provides one level of assurance that the learning experiences have been designed to support the specified learning outcomes, at least in terms of the time period or sequence. Relating schedules to learning outcomes gives learners and user organizations some assurance that what was promised actually will be provided. It is not required that such an agenda be followed rigidly; rather, that a *good faith effort* is made to follow the prepared agenda.

2.5 **Principle**

Learning outcomes are sequenced so that learners are able to recognize their progress toward achieving the stated learning outcomes.

Amplifications and Interpretation of Principle

2.5.1 The learning outcomes are arranged in a recognizable and logical sequence from entry level to exit level.

2.5.2 The learners are provided the complete set of stated learning outcomes either prior to or at the beginning of the program/activity.

Discussion

When learners recognize the milestones that they have successfully achieved, they frequently are motivated to the next higher level. Logically sequenced learning outcomes in a program/activity can serve as milestones and points of celebration when these same learning outcomes are successfully achieved. It also has been demonstrated that when learners receive complete sets of learning outcomes at the beginning of the program/activity and are informed of their progress throughout the learning experience, a better learning achievement rate is experienced by the learners.

PART THREE:
Learning Experiences in Continuing Education

3.1 **Principle**

Learning experiences are designed to facilitate the role of the learner and are organized in such a manner as to provide for appropriate continuity, sequencing, and integration of the program/activity to achieve the specified learning outcomes.

Amplifications and Interpretation of Principle

3.1.1 Learning experiences are designed in a manner that promotes active learner participation.

3.1.2 Learning experiences are designed to provide feedback to learners regarding their progress.

3.1.3 The design of learning experiences takes into account the individuality of the learners.

3.1.4 Learning experiences are organized to provide reiteration of major concepts, skills, and so forth.

3.1.5 Learning experiences are organized to permit learners to advance from simple to more complex levels of development.

3.1.6 Learning experiences are organized to help learners understand the relationships between the concepts presented and their application beyond the boundaries of the learning environment.

Discussion

Learning takes place through learners' experiences and their reactions to the educational activity. The design of educational activities should involve learners in thinking, doing, reacting, and experiencing. For learning to occur, learners must actively participate in the content being addressed.

To hold adult learners' interest, they must periodically be given feedback on their performance. Such feedback maintains the learners' interest as well as helps them to modify their behavior when needed to achieve the desired learning outcomes.

A single learning experience may not have a profound effect on adult learners. Considerable time and experience often are needed to effect major changes in adults' knowledge, skills, and attitude. Therefore, learning experiences must reinforce each other. Major concepts undergirding a continuing education learning experience need to be reiterated and opportunity should be provided for the adult learners to practice the desired behavior or apply the concepts learned. In addition, each successive learning experience in a program course or a series of related courses should build on the preceding one, while leading the learner more broadly and deeply into the content being addressed. Also, the learning experience should be organized to help learners see relationships between concepts addressed and their own behavior. The learning of skills or concepts should not be developed as isolated behavior, but as a part of the learners' total ability to be employed in various situations as needed and appropriate.

3.2 **Principle**

The statements of intended learning outcomes of a continuing education program/activity determine the selection of instructional strategies, instructional materials, media and other learning technology, and create an appropriate learning environment.

Amplifications and Interpretation of Principle

3.2.1 The learning activities and strategies of the program/activity are selected to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

3.2.2 An appropriate learning environment is selected to enhance the achievement of learning outcomes.

3.2.3 The media and learning technology utilized are geared to the implicit type of performance to be achieved, that is, implicit in the learning outcome.

3.2.4 Handout materials are chosen and utilized to help achieve the intended learning outcomes. Resource materials are selected and utilized in a manner that makes clear to both learners and instructional personnel which learning outcome(s) these materials are designed to support.

Discussion

Statements of intended learning outcomes project the desired results of a continuing education program/activity and thus are the heartbeat for the entire learning experience. Learning outcomes are the reference point for all the other design, development, and implementation efforts. Thus, all support components of the learning experience must be keyed to and shown to support the focus established by the learning outcomes.

3.3 **Principle**

Program content, instructional materials, and delivery processes are relevant and timely for achieving intended learning outcomes.

Amplifications and Interpretation of Principle

3.3.1 Instructor and learner materials have a clearly defined instructional purpose.

3.3.2 Periodically, a systematic review of previously developed materials and delivery systems is conducted to maintain content quality and timeliness with relation to desired learner outcomes.

3.3.3 Content, delivery processes, and materials are reviewed, modified, and updated before a program/activity is offered to a subsequent audience.

Discussion

The program developer must review the program/activity materials and delivery process periodically to assure that they are accurate an consistent with currently accepted standards relating to the intended learner outcomes. Between and subsequent to these reviews, obsolete elements should be deleted.

3.4 **Principle**

Instructional staff in continuing education programs/activities are qualified by education or experience to provide quality instruction in the relevant subject-matter area.

Amplifications and Interpretation of Principle

3.4.1 The number of instructors for each program/activity should permit the use of effective instructional methods and effective interaction with the learner group.

3.4.2 The instructor, speaker, or educational leader of the learner group is competent in the subject-matter area based on work experience, formal education or training, publications, recognition by peers, or professional credentials.

3.4.3 Instructors should be able to plan learning experiences, to teach adult learners, and know how to measure *what* the participants learned and *how well* they learned it.

3.4.4 Adequate support services should be available and utilized.

Discussion

Many of the learners in continuing education programs/activities are practicing professionals who usually demand or need highly specialized educational experiences. Faculty for these learner groups often are recruited from among practicing professionals, industry sources, the community at large, as well as staff of the sponsoring organization. To ensure the success of the program/activity, special care must be exercised to select qualified instructors from these sources.

Providers are responsible for communicating program/activity design and intended learning outcomes to teaching staff and for working with the instructors through content planning to assure that the learning outcomes will be addressed. Whenever possible, the instructors should be closely involved in planning and evaluating the continuing education program/activity. Even when instructors have a major portion of responsibility for program/activity planning, providers should be actively involved in the process.

3.5 **Principle**

The physical environment for the continuing education program/activity is conducive to learning.

Amplifications and Interpretation of Principle

3.5.1 The physical facilities provided are appropriate and consistent with intended learning outcomes.

3.5.2 The physical facilities are adequate to accommodate the size of the audience and address the learners' physical comfort needs.

3.5.3 The physical facilities are readily accessible to the learner population.

3.5.4 Appropriate instructional aids, equipment, and reference materials are accessible.

Discussion

The physical environment in which the continuing education program/activity is conducted will directly affect the learner. Consideration should be given to the unique needs of the adult learner with regard to physical comfort and its relation to current adult learning practice. Access for and appropriate assistance to physically impaired or handicapped learners should be arranged.

Access to library facilities, reference materials, and additional instructional aids is essential to most continuing education programs/activities. The learner should be advised as to the availability of such resources and any constraints that might limit their use.

PART FOUR:
Assessment of Learning Outcomes

4.1 **Principle**

Continuing education programs/activities are evaluated through assessment of learners' performance in terms of intended learning outcomes.

Amplifications and Interpretation of Principle

4.1.1 The assessment techniques or strategies used should enable the sponsor or provider to determine whether or not the stated learning outcomes are being or were achieved.

4.1.2 Learners are provided with means to evaluate the continuing education experience from their perspective.

4.1.3 Participants in the program/activity should be apprised in advance that learning outcomes will be assessed.

4.1.4 Data on the extent to which the program/activity attained the stated learning outcomes is used, in conjunction with collaborative evaluation by learners, instructors, and others, to make modifications when they are deemed necessary or appropriate.

Discussion

The provider of a continuing education program/activity should make a "good faith" effort to assess the performance of participants in terms of intended learning outcomes. A "good faith" effort is systematic and uses the statements of learning outcomes as the reference for selecting the appropriate assessment technique or strategy. Assessments may be conducted at the end of the program/activity, but preferably at appropriate intervals during the learning activity. If assessments are made intermittently during the learning activity, the resulting feedback should be shared with the learners. It may be useful to obtain data on the learners' performance levels prior to their undertaking the program/activity to establish more clearly that it was the program/activity and not prior experience or learning that was reflected in the assessment.

Assessment techniques[1] that might be used are:

Performance tests:
- Work samples
- Unobtrusive observations

Simulations:
- Leaderless group discussion
- Management games
- Interview simulation and/or role-playing
- Stress interview
- Written simulations
- Case study method
- Individual fact-finding and decision-making
- In-basket test

[1] See Joan Knapp and A. T. Sharon, *Compendium of Assessment Techniques* (Columbia, Maryland: Cael), 1975.

Assessment centers

Essay examinations

Objective written examinations

Interviews:

- Structured/unstructured interviews
- Panel interviews
- Oral tests
- Oral report or presentation
- Oral trade test
- Self-assessment
- Ratings
- Product assessment

Since continuing education programs/activities typically have a limited time period assigned for the accomplishment of stated learning outcomes, the relative balance of instructional time to assessment time is an important issue. Its resolution should be sought by making the assessment itself a learning experience, and by using the most efficient means for establishing that the learning outcomes are being/were attained. The former can be facilitated by providers being aware the adult learners can regard assessment as quite threatening, even to the extent that some potential learners may decide not to participate in a program/activity in which their learning efforts will be subjected to a formal assessment. The latter can be advanced by considering (1) the necessity for all learners to be assessed on all learning outcomes or (2) the necessity of acquiring assessment data on each learner or whether group data would suffice. Additionally, careful consideration should be given to policies and practices for reporting and documenting learning outcomes that will protect learners' rights to privacy and confidentiality.

PART FIVE:
Continuing Education Administration

5.1 **Principle**

Each continuing education provider has a clearly stated, written statement of its mission, which is available to the publics served.

Amplifications and Interpretation of Principle

5.1.1 The mission statement is a description of the continuing education provider's purposes.

5.1.2 The mission statement embraces the philosophy of quality in continuing education.

5.1.3 The mission statement is consistent with the mission statement of the parent organization, if applicable.

5.1.4 Human, fiscal, and physical resources available are consistent with the continuing education provider's mission.

Discussion

The mission statement should be realistic in terms of what the continuing education provider is trying to do, for whom, and how. Frequently, it is helpful to include information on content with which the provider *will not* be concerned, on whom the provider will not serve, and on what methods will not be used.

The mission statement should be realistic in terms of what is achievable with available or foreseeable human, fiscal, and physical resources. If the continuing education provider is a part of a larger or parent organization, the mission statement of the provider should be consistent with the mission statement of the parent organization.

5.2 **Principle**

The continuing education provider has appropriate, sufficient, and stable *human, fiscal,* and *physical* resources to provide quality programs/activities over an extended period of time.

Amplifications and Interpretation of Principle

5.2.1 The administrative and instructional personnel of the continuing education provider have education and experience that match their responsibility and authority.

5.2.2 The management of the continuing education provider encourages and provides opportunities for the continuing development of each individual within the provider organization.

5.2.3 A sufficient budget is available to support organization, program/activity, and learner outcomes.

5.2.4 Adequate physical resources are available to support organization, program/activity, and learner outcomes.

5.2.5 The use of human, fiscal, and physical resources reflects organization and management commitment to quality programming in continuing education.

5.2.6 Human, fiscal, and physical resources show evidence of being stable over time.

Discussion

Quality programming in continuing education seldom is achieved in "one-shot" efforts. The provider organization should have a long-range plan with resources available to reach both short-term and long-range goals. Its management's encouragement and support for quality programming in continuing education programs/activities should be evident. Consistent quality in programming is more likely in a stable organization.

Management should encourage and support the continuing education organization as it strives to set a good example, in all aspects of employee relations and practices, especially in providing each employee with appropriate work assignments and appropriate compensation and opportunities for continuing education and other professional development.

5.3 **Principle**

The continuing education provider's promotion and advertising provide full and accurate disclosures about its programs, services, and fees.

Amplifications and Interpretation of Principle

5.3.1 The continuing education provider practices truth in advertising.

5.3.2 Misleading statements regarding programs, services, and fees are avoided.

5.3.3 All charges for programs and services are clearly identified.

Discussion

Promotional materials should include all necessary information for the public to make informed decisions about enrolling in programs/activities being offered. The following should be clearly indicated:

- Name and address of primary sponsoring organization.
- Names of other sponsors or approving bodies.
- Name and phone number of person assigned responsibility for the program/activity.
- Title and content of program/activity.
- Intended learning outcomes of the program/activity.
- Instructional methods to be used.
- Nature of audience that may best benefit from the program/activity.
- Schedule of the program/activity.
- All charges to the participant.
- Refund policies.
- Requirements for satisfactory completion of the program/activity.
- Amount and type of continuing education recognition that can be earned by completing the program/activity.
- Credentials of the faculty.

Advertising speakers who do not participate or learning outcomes that are unlikely to be attained is inappropriate.

5.4 **Principle**

The continuing education provider ensures the maintenance of a set of limited-access, permanent records of participants and the provision of documentation for accurate, readily available transcripts.

Amplifications and Interpretation of Principle

5.4.1 Accurate participation records are maintained with sufficient documentation to meet the needs of the continuing education participant and the provider.

5.4.2 Complete transcripts are maintained and made available to continuing education participants and to others upon request of the participant.

5.4.3 The continuing education provider has a written policy on *releasing* records, consistent with federal and state statutes, which ensures limited access.

5.4.4 The continuing education provider has a written policy on *retention* of records consistent with federal and state statutes.

5.4.5 The continuing education provider has written provisions for permanent maintenance of records in the event of its demise.

Discussion

The continuing education provider should be committed to maintaining complete and accurate participant records. The data about the individual participant and program course(s) should be complete enough to avoid confusion and should include *at least* the following:

- Name of course/activity and provider.
- Brief course description, including intended learning outcomes.
- Data on course/activity.
- Length (in contact hours) of course/activity.
- Name of learner.
- Satisfactory completion of course/activity and recognition awarded.

The organization should provide staff to record data, check records, and verify participant's activities for certification, licensure, tax, and employment purposes. In addition, security must exist to maintain participant privacy and prevent tampering by anyone. Also, records should be protected against fire and other disasters. When contracting with another organization to maintain records and issue transcripts, the continuing education provider should ensure that all the foregoing conditions are met.

5.5 **Principle**

The continuing education provider makes available to participants recognition and documentation of achievement of learning outcomes specified for the continuing education program/activity.

Amplifications and Interpretation of Principle

5.5.1 Recognition is provided only for demonstration of learning outcomes specified for the continuing education program/activity.

5.5.2 All successful participants are provided with documentation that they completed the program/activity.

5.5.3 The type of recognition provided may be expressed in some unit of measure appropriate to the continuing education program/activity.

Discussion

Recognition should be awarded only when the participant has met all the requirements specified by the program/activity. If the type of recognition provided is in terms of a unit of measure such as a certificate, diploma, hours completed, or an established unit, the award must be appropriate to the nature and structure of the learning activity. If an established unit of measure is used, such as the physician recognition point or CEU, the units awarded must be consistent with criteria and guidelines that pertain to the established measure.

5.6 **Principle**

The continuing education provider ensures that appropriate quality control systems are in place and in use within its organization.

Amplifications and Interpretation of Principle

5.6.1 Quality control relates to all aspects of the continuing education program/activity, beginning with identification of learning needs and continuing with establishment of intended learning outcomes, provision of appropriate learning experiences, systematic assessment of learner performance, and systematic, periodic evaluations of the elements in the program/activity as well as evaluation of the program/activity as a whole.

5.6.2 Quality control implies that the provider or sponsor has predetermined written standards and criteria that can be used to make judgments about elements of the program/activity and the program/activity as a whole.

5.6.3 The provider or sponsor should be sensitive to the possibility of unintended desirable or undesirable learning outcomes and be prepared to capitalize on the former and reduce the latter.

5.6.4 Quality control data are used to modify the resources, processes, and procedures used to enhance attainment of the desired learning outcomes.

5.6.5 Identifiable staff are responsible for quality control within the continuing education provider's organization.

Discussion

Quality control is achieved through systematic evaluation of what is intended in relation to what actually occurs. Appropriate quality control procedures should be developed for evaluating individual programs/activities as well as for evaluating the functioning of the provider's organization as a whole.

The focus of quality control is on delivery of worthwhile educational experiences desired by the learner and user organization. Consequently the purposes of quality control are to establish that this objective is being accomplished and to effect appropriate changes in the educational program/activity to ensure accomplishment.

Organizational discipline is required to ensure that the quality control mechanisms are used and that appropriate programmatic and organizational responses result from their application.

A quality control system normally will include those procedures and staff to assure that:

- Programs/activities have explicit learning outcomes that conform to the learning needs of the participants and assist the continuing education provider to achieve its mission.
- Each learning activity includes systematic assessment of learner achievement, either during or after the learning activity is completed.
- Programs/activities are evaluated periodically by comparing the degree of learner achievement to intended learning outcomes and by examining how the individual program/activity contributes to the overall mission of the provider's organization.
- Evaluation results are used as the base for modifications wherever necessary or appropriate.
- Qualified staff are assigned responsibility for quality control within the provider's organization.

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